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SUB: BIO - PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES:
TRAN VAN LY - HUYNH CONG DUONG

REF: A) SAIGON 76 B) SAIGON 154

1. LY IS AN ELDERLY CENTRAL CATHOLIC LAY LEADER AND POLITICAIN. DUONG IS A 64-YEAR OLD NOTABLE FROM DINH TUONG PROVINCE IN THE SOUTH.

2. LY WAS BORN IN 1901 IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE, OF A MIDDLE-CLASS FARMING FAMILY RELATED TO THAT OF EMPEROR BAO DAI. HE ATTENDED A SECONDARY CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HUE AND GRADUATED FROM THE HIGHER SCHOOL OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION IN HANOI IN 1922 AND FROM THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT'S SCHOOL OF HIGHER STUDIES IN HUE IN 1924. AFTER A BRIEF TOUR OF DUTY WITH THE FRENCH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION IN THAT YEAR HE BEGAN A LONG CAREER OF SERVICE TO THE IMPERIAL MANDARINATE, SERVING UNTIL 1936 AS THE CHIEF OF VARIOUS DISTRICTS IN CENTRAL VIET-NAM, AND FROM 1936 UNTIL 1940 AS A PROVINCE CHIEF.

3. IN 1940 LY WAS NAMED TO A POST IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN HUE, AND BY 1943 HE WAS DIRECTOR OF THE EMPEROR'S CIVIL CABINET. LY COLLABORATED WITH THE JAPANESE AND AFTER THE MARCH 1945 JAPANESE COUP WAS APPOINTED GOVENOR OF FOUR PROVINCES OF SOUTH VIET-NAM. WHEN THE VIET MINH CAME TO POWER HE WAS ARRESTED AND IMPRISIONED AT DALAT, BUT WAS RELEASED AFTER TWO WEEKS LARGELY BECAUSE OF HIS POSITION AS A CATHOLIC LEADER. HE REMAINED INFLEXIBLY OPPOSED TO THE VIET MINH AND ALMOST AS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO FRENCH PRE-EMINENCE IN VIETNAMESE

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AFFAIRS.

4. IN MAY 1947 LY WAS NAMED PRESIDENT OF THE FIRST PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED IN CENTRAL VIET-NAM BY THE FRENCH. IN THAT CAPACITY HE TRIED TO ORGANIZE AN AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION AND NATIONAL ARMY, AND WENT TO HONG KONG IN LATE 1947 AND EARLY 1948 FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH BAO DAO REGARDING THE LATTER'S RETURN. IN JUNE 1948 HE WAS REMOVED FROM HIS POST, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE OF HIS INABILITY TO GET ALONG WITH THE FRENCH. WHEN THE FIRST BAO DAI GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED IN JULY 1949 HE WAS APPOINTED MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS BUT REFUSED TO ACCEPT BECAUSE HE REGARDED THE PORTFOLIO AS TOO INSIGNIFICANT FOR A MAN OF HIS STATURE.

5. IN THE SUMMER OF 1951 LY ACCEPTED APPOINTMENT AS GOVERNOR OF CENTRAL VIET-NAM AND INSTITUTED AN AUSTERITY PROGRAM. HE DISMISSED INCOMPETENT OR CORRUPT OFFICIALS, AND SO INCURRED THE WRATH OF THE QUEEN MOTHER. HE LEFT HIS POST IN 1952.

6. AFTER NGO DINH DIEM CAME TO POWER IN 1954 HE OFFERED

LY CABINET POSTS AT SEVERAL DIFFERENT TIMES, BUT LY ALWAYS REFUSED. LY BECAME AN OVERT OPPONENT OF THE GOVERNMENT IN APRIL 1960 WHEN HE SIGNED THE CARAVELLE PETITION ASKING FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORMS INTHE REGIME. HE WAS ARRESTED BRIEFLY AFTER THE ATTEMPTED COUP OF NOVEMBER 1960 BUT RELEASED IN FEBRUARY 1961. HE WAS REPORTEDLY AGAIN ARRESTED AND HELD BRIEFLY IN 1962; IN JULY 1963 HE WAS TRIED AND ACQUITTED.

7. AFTER THE FALL OF DIEM, LY'S NAME WAS MENTIONED FOR PROMINENT POSTS IN THE NEW REGIME, BUT HE DID NOT SERVE IN THE COUNCIL OF NOTABLES. HE WANTED A GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED BY CIVILIANS AND IN JUNE 1964 ISSUED A PAPER CRITICIZING POST-DIEM GOVERNMENTS AND CALLING FOR A GOVERNMENT OF "PERSONALITIES" IN WHICH CATHOLICS WOULD ASSUME A PROMINENT ROLE IN PROSECUTING THE WAR. IN JUNE 1965 LY WAS A SIGNATORY OF A PETITION CALLING ON THE NEW DIRECTORATE OF GENERALS TO AVOID THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST.

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